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## **Testimony Opposing House Bill 5535, An Act Concerning Notice of a Patient's Observation Status and Notice Concerning the Qualifications of Those Who Provide Health Care and Counseling Services**

**March 14, 2014**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Sandra Staub. I'm the legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut and I'm here to oppose House Bill 5535, An Act Concerning Notice of a Patient's Observation Status and Notice Concerning the Qualifications of Those Who Provide Health Care and Counseling Services.

We wish to commend Representative Johnson for sponsoring legislation that we understand was developed in response to reports of deceptive acts and practices at some crisis pregnancy centers. I think we can all agree that it is wrong for any crisis pregnancy center to lure a woman into a facility by generating the impression that she will receive medically accurate and comprehensive reproductive health options, as well as non-directive counseling, when in fact she will receive no such care. We share the concern that these practices undermine women's access to all services that will enable her to make her own choice with respect to reproduction, and we hope that any future efforts to regulate this conduct be more specifically drafted.

We urge this committee to consider that the religious exemption in this bill could be used by crisis pregnancy centers as a license to deceive women, provided a religious component is added into the counseling. In other words, if these centers are not currently providing religious counseling, they will start doing so in order to avoid the requirements of this legislation.

Reports indicate that these crisis pregnancy centers present a threat to public health and we hope that Representative Johnson and other legislators will continue to work to find a way to combat it. We suggest that legislation to establish a careful study of the reported deceptive acts and practices will be the most beneficial way to protect women's access to reproductive choice, as provided by our Constitution. It is important to have detailed information about whatever problems exist so that this body can then consider a properly crafted solution.

Thank you for your time and attention to this issue and for the opportunity to convey our concerns.